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DEANSGATE
 **LABOUR**
COUNCILLORS
REPRESENTING YOUR COMMUNITY

C/O Members' Services Office,
Town Hall Extension PO Box 532,
Manchester City Council,
Manchester
M60 2LA
30th August 2019

Sally MacDonald,
Liverpool Road,
Manchester
M3 4FP

Dear Sally MacDonald,

Strike by Science and Industry Museum Staff due to pay dispute

It is my understanding that today staff at the Science and Industry Museum (SIM) are taking part in a 24-hour strike following the support of over 79% of Prospect trade union members across the Science Museum Group (SMG) in a ballot. Today's strike follows five days of action short of strike to which SMG has not yielded.

I would like to express my support for your workers striking today in their fight for fair pay, and my sincere disappointment that SMG's senior management has refused to meet their very reasonable demands. I will be joining them this morning on their picket line.

I understand that this year, management of SMG imposed a below-inflation pay rise of 1.5% (or a real terms pay cut) on most staff, which is the latest in a long series of real terms pay cuts which have left SMG staff 13% poorer in real terms pay since 2010. Meanwhile, SMG has grown a significant operational surplus and senior management salary growth has exceeded 5.5% per year between 2014 and 2018.

It is also the case that SMG does not pay the real living wage across its museums, including SIM here in Manchester. This must change.

As I am sure you are aware, Manchester City Council is currently seeking accreditation as a Living Wage Employer with the Living Wage Foundation, and pay all our directly employed staff a minimum of £9.51 per hour, which is above the current Real Living Wage of £9 per hour as recommended by the Foundation. The Council places high importance on commitments to paying living wages through our Social Value policies in procurement. These efforts have my full support.

I believe that this commitment to fair pay and decent work extends beyond the Council's immediate levers of control and must be extended to all people in our city. It would be

remiss of me, therefore, not to repeat my severe disappointment to you that the senior management of SMG refuse to pay staff fair wages that rise with the cost of living.

SIM plays a crucial role in telling the story of the industrial revolution, and it reminds each of its 684,000 annual (2017/18) visitors about the economic progress that took place then and since. As we know from this history, the workers of Manchester suffered greatly, living in squalor in this cradle of industrialism during that same time.

Today, Manchester's economy is a cradle of creativity, and sits in the midst of a revolution in cultural and creative industries. We must learn from our history, we must avoid repeating its mistakes, and we must share prosperity. If cultural industries are to be part of our economic future, then we must show that Manchester people can prosper from them. Part of that means that every worker should be paid enough to get by—they must be paid the Real Living Wage and they should not suffer real terms pay cuts.

SIM's place in Manchester is both of our industrial past and of our cultural future. So, it should play an important role in showing that we have learnt from our history, we have avoided its mistakes, and we will build an inclusive, prosperous future. I ask you to commit that SIM will rise to this task.

I would implore you and the senior management across SMG to engage Prospect trade union, meet their demands, and commit to paying your staff fair, decent wages now and in the future. I further hope that you can also start the journey to becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer in earnest, as I would expect of all of Manchester City Council's partners and anchor institutions in the ward I represent.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Marcus Johns

Labour & Co-operative Councillor for Deansgate Ward

Copied to: Lucy Powell MP; Councillor Luthfur Rahman Executive Member for Skills, Culture and Leisure; Councillor Hannah Priest Chair of Economy Scrutiny Committee; Councillor William Jeavons; and Councillor Joan Davies.

Given the importance of paying living wages and my public commitment to this agenda, I have made this letter public.